

newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 237
Jan 2010

From Hatton Garden to Hampstead: buildings of the Royal Free

Thurs. 21 January, 7.30pm

Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street, NW1
(road opposite the Roundhouse)

The Royal Free Hospital is very much a Camden fixture for it was founded in 1828 by a young surgeon, William Marsden, in Greville Street, Hatton Garden and over the years has occupied premises in Gray's Inn Road, Euston Road and Pond Street as well as in Liverpool Road, Islington. When it began the hospital was officially known as the London General Institution for the Gratuitous Care of Malignant Diseases.

Our speaker is Neil McIntyre, Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the Royal Free, who is engaged in writing a history of the hospital and its Medical School. Dr McIntyre will describe and explore the buildings, their architecture and design.

London's Bridges: tolls, suicides and bombs

Thurs 18 Feb, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

Peter Matthews, our speaker this evening, points out in his recently published book on London's bridges, that *The Times* in 1838 observed that 'The people of London have a reputation for taking no interest in their bridges'. Despite that, Mr Matthews wrote a fascinating account of the construction of the bridges and the events which surrounded them, which has sold well. The only bridge across the Thames until 1750 was the medieval stone London Bridge. Vested interests had prevented additions. The City of London wanted to maintain its toll revenue on London Bridge, the watermen carried passengers along the Thames and wanted no alternative routes, and ferry owners had an obvious and legitimate worry.

But bridges aplenty came in the 19th century, including railway bridges. The story of all these, or at least many of them, and events which are alluded to in the title of this talk, will make a fascinating evening in February.

An operation in progress at the Royal Free in Gray's Inn Road in 1895.



The Society's Website

www.camdenhistorysociety.org

buy our publications online • check on events to come and past • download currently out-of-print publications • consult index to our Review and Newsletter • access to Hampstead Court Rolls • view sample pages from our publications

A New President

The Council has appointed a new President, following the untimely death of Christopher Elrington. She is Professor Caroline Barron, Professor of History at Royal Holloway College, University of London. Specialising in medieval history, especially that of the City of London, she is author of *London in the Later Middle Ages: Government and People 1200-1500* (OUP 2004). Of particular interest to us, because we are engaged in the project of translating and putting online the early Hampstead Court Rolls, she also supervised the completion of the Manorial Documents Register for Middlesex.

We are delighted that she accepted our invitation to be President and we look forward to her involvement with the Society.

New Council Members

We have also appointed two new members of the Council, Clare Melhuish and Lester May.

Clare was author of our 2006 publication, *The Life and Times of the Brunswick, Bloomsbury*, an account of the building and the subsequent history of the Brunswick Centre. Clare is an architectural writer and an anthropologist.

Lester May has long been a member of the Society and takes a special interest in the affairs of Camden Town. He was particularly busy on behalf of the Society in 1991 when we initiated the celebrations of the 200th anniversary of Camden Town.

Things to Come

Please put the following in your new diaries:

18 March: Andrew King on the early and later life of John Harrison, clockmaker. At Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre.

15 April: The Launch of the second edition of *Streets of Old Holborn*. At Burgh House.

20 May: Howard Spencer on the History of the London Blue Plaque scheme. At Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre.

17 Jun: AGM and Professor Sir David Cannadine on Winston Churchill, Anglo-America and the 'special relationship'. At Burgh House

15 Jul: Robin Woolven on Repairing Camden's World War II damage. At Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre.

A CHANDELIER AT ST GEORGE'S

The newly-renovated St George's Bloomsbury has been loaned a magnificent chandelier by the V & A. Of Dutch origin, the piece hung in the main entrance of the V & A between 1909 and 1999. It is 2.8m tall, 2.6m wide with 36 scrolling branches in three tiers. It was produced between 1680 and 1730.

Final Performance

Marian Kamlisch writes:

On 19 January 1872 ten-year-old Jessie Millward of 9 Malden Crescent, Kentish Town, was admitted as a pupil at Miss Buss's North London Collegiate School for Girls in Camden Road. Jessie's father was a journalist with strong links to the theatre and was a founding member of the Savage Club. This association of men working in literature and the arts held monthly 'pot-house' suppers in each other's houses on a Sunday and when Jessie was nine it had been the turn of the Millwards to host this event. Among the many well known guests that evening had been the actor-manager Henry Irving. Soon after this Jessie was taken, by her father, to see a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* at the Adelphi, and from that moment her ambition was fixed.

In 1880 Mr and Mrs Millward, and their by now seven children, moved into Crowndale House on the corner of Oakley Square, near Mornington Crescent. Jessie, by then 18, was taken up by actress Mrs Madge Kendal and this led to Jessie achieving her aim of becoming a professional actress.

In the 1860s Dickens' mistress, the actress Nelly Ternan, had also lived in the vicinity of Mornington Crescent, first at 2 Houghton Place, Amptill Square, and later in Lidlington Place.

Some twenty years later Jessie also became the mistress of a famous man – actor William Terriss, who became even more famous when he was murdered outside the Adelphi Theatre in 1897 by a deranged fellow-actor. In *Final Performance* Ruth Silvestre cleverly reconstructs the relationship between Jessie and Terriss in a new book subtitled 'a true story of love, jealousy, murder and hypocrisy'. It paints an evocative picture of theatrical life at the end of the nineteenth century.

Matador ISBN 978-1848761 44 5 181pp £7.99.

The Hampstead Book

In the last *Newsletter* you should have received a flyer inviting you to hear Steven Denford talk about his new publication *The Hampstead Book*, published by Historical Publications. It is a profusely illustrated A-Z history of the events, buildings and people that have shaped this notable part of London.

The talk will be at Burgh House on Wednesday, 27 January at 7.30pm. Wine will be served. Please telephone 020 7607 1628 to reserve your place.

A PUB QUIZ TEAM

Led by Lester May, a CHS team consisting of him, Roger Cline, Edward Mustoe and John Richardson competed at the Oxford Arms, Camden Town, in December. We were hopelessly outclassed, failing almost completely in the rounds involving TV, pop music and sport. We came 10th out of 13. Perhaps we need to stay in more.

Lost London 1870-1945

368pp 600 ills hardback £29.99

English Heritage

This is a sumptuously produced book featuring some of the old LCC picture collection which seems to have found its way into the ownership of English Heritage. Illustrations include the last of the Holborn coaching inns (unnamed) at 116-117 Theobalds Road in 1910, and another Holborn coaching inn, the Old Bell Tavern in 1897. There is a magnificent photograph of Wych Street, which had many 17th-century buildings, taken in 1901 and another remarkable interior view of Crosby Hall, then still in Bishopsgate. Most dramatically the slums of central London a hundred years ago are shown – a pictorial reminder of the so-called 'good old days'. Hampstead warrants only one page – good pictures of Perrins Lane and Romney's House, though there is much later a wonderful picture of Hunters Lodge in Belsize Lane in 1943. St Pancras also has only one page – a rare picture of houses at Cumberland Market. So, there is not a great deal of local interest, but if you feel you are also a Londoner it is an arresting collection. The text is by Philip Davies, who is English Heritage's Planning and Development Officer for London and South-East England.

An exhibition featuring many of the illustrations will be at Kenwood House from 23 January to 5 April. Admission is free.

Visit to Apothecaries' Hall

Peter Woodford has arranged a visit for 12-20 CHS members to Apothecaries' Hall on 16 April. This will be on the very 350th anniversary of the birth of Hans Sloane who undertook his first studies in medical botany. The cost will be £5 per member.

Members wishing to see this remarkable Hall should contact Peter Woodford at the address etc on p4 of this Newsletter.

Dr Joan Schwitzer

Unfortunately we did not know before the last Newsletter was published that Joan Schwitzer had died. Joan was a long-standing member of the Society but her main loyalty and energy was devoted to the Hornsey Historical Society of which she was a founder in 1971 and its chairwoman for ten years. She was instrumental in obtaining what used to be the Old Schoolhouse in Tottenham Lane (but later on a redundant bus shelter) as premises for the HHS – a factor which has been of great importance in the growth of the Society. She was a teacher for some years at St Michael's Primary School in Highgate, and wrote an excellent account of its history which showed how the school related to developments in national education at the time.

Joan died in September, aged 86.

Mount Grove

Julia Smith writes:

Back in 1961, I lived for about 18 months in an old mansion at 102 Fitzjohn's Avenue, which had been taken over by the then local authority, Hampstead Borough Council. The house was called Mount Grove and it was demolished when Henderson Court was built on the site. Although I had lived there only for a short period, I and other residents remember the old house with immense affection and it was heart-breaking to see the bulldozers moving in to destroy it. The only remnant is, I believe, part of the present wall which fronts Henderson Court.

Mount Grove had a magnificent drive, a wonderful fireplace in the main hall, and a beautiful staircase. The rear garden, which adjoined the back of the Greenhill flats, boasted a fish pond and a gazebo, and it was not unusual to find barn owls nesting in some of the venerable old trees. We understood Mount Grove to have been an early home of one of the biscuit manufacturing families, but I have never been able to trace a sketch or picture of the house. The first *Streets of Hampstead* makes a reference to a Mount Grove or Rookery on the site of Greenhill in Prince Arthur Road, but said this was demolished in 1872 – obviously not the Mount Grove of 1961, although it bears the same name.

Should a member have any other information or picture, I would be delighted to hear details.

Ms Smith's address is Flat 8c, Fraser Regnart Court, Southampton Road, NW5 4HU.

Another Publication Prize

For the fourth year running the Society has received a LAMAS award for a publication, this time the top award for a local history publication issued in 2008. This was for *Camden History Review* No. 32. Congratulations to the editor, David Hayes, Ivor Kamlisch the designer and, of course, the contributors.

King's Cross Bangladeshi Voices exhibition

This exhibition uses material collected as part of the King's Cross Voices project and focuses on the lives of eight men and women with roots in Bangladesh. It is on display at the Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre from 27 January to 1 April.

Visit to the Garrick Club

On 3rd December members of CHS visited the Garrick Club. Members will know that its unique picture collection featuring English theatre personalities has been restored and rehung on newly-decorated walls, in rooms which have been refurbished thanks to income derived from Disney's purchase of rights in *Winnie the Pooh*, left to the Club by the author A A Milne.

Our tour was conducted by Frances Hughes, a NADFAS lecturer in Art and Theatre history, who is a superb speaker on theatre and the paintings at the Garrick, and by Betty Beesley who was formerly the Club's secretary.

The Club was founded in 1831, fifty years after the death of David Garrick, as a club connected with the arts and theatre. The first premises were in King Street, Covent Garden, but in 1864 the present site was cleared of slums and the new clubhouse was built to designs by Frederick Marrable. The Club was able to acquire the picture collection of Charles Mathews, a comic actor, who had amassed over 300 theatrical paintings; his son inherited the collection and built an art gallery at Ivy Cottage in Millfield Lane, Highgate. A portrait of Mathews senior sits over the mantelpiece in the Members' Lounge, which is in the well of the main staircase.

All the principal rooms are decorated in a late high Victorian style, with rich colours, and fabrics mostly in velvet and damask. The Irving Room at the rear on the ground floor is now used for 'casual' lunches, its decoration distinguished by a robust pomegranate design anaglypta wallpaper in deep green with hand-painted highlights and elaborate swagged curtains. The room includes paintings of several actors, including Ellen Terry. The walls of the Members' Dining Room were also lined with theatrical luminaries. Betty Beesley described the sitting arrangements and the stipulation of good conversation.

Up on the first floor, we visited the Coffee Room, a vast sitting room with an elaborate coved cornice. This room includes paintings by Zoffany whose patron was David Garrick. We then visited what was for me the best room in the Club which is the Members' bar, the walls covered in paintings of actors well known to any person interested in Eng-

lish theatre, including Maggie Smith, Alec Guinness, Timothy West, Lawrence Olivier, Isabel Jeans, Sybil Thorndike, Arthur Ransome, Tom Courtney, Christopher Fry and Michael Gambon.

Finally, we came to the Library where librarian Marcus Risdell gave us a small indication of the historical significance of the collection. He reminded us that Charles Dickens was a member but resigned three times and had a long-standing dispute with Thackeray. The visit was memorable.

It pains this writer, having so enjoyed the tour and the erudition of the guides, to write that the Club appears no closer to ending its exclusion of women from membership. Britain is replete with an exceptional talent of actors of both sexes, not to mention playwrights, authors and directors. Indeed, the walls of the Garrick are alive with portraits of the many women who have made theatrical history. However, a majority of the Club's membership seems to have lost the ability to distinguish between traditions which are worth preserving and those which require reform: exclusion, purely on the grounds of sex regardless of talent, is surely one of them. I am told that the late Ian Norrie had tried on a few occasions to change the rule in this matter and hoped that the next vote would do so. Let us hope so.

Helen English

Excavations on the riverfront

Last year the Museum of London archaeological unit completed a series of digs at Riverbank House on the Thames waterfront, between London Bridge and Cannon Street railway station. Finds included coins and tokens, pilgrim souvenirs, a large decorated ampulla to hold holy water, knives, pins, buckles, fishing weights, horseshoes, a candle holder, cloth seals, chapes, a needle holder, razors, numerous dress accessories. There was even an ice-skate.

More impressively there was a lead openwork panel, with four scenes from the life and death of Thomas of Lancaster, which probably dates from the mid 14th century. Thomas was executed in 1322 following his capture and trial at Pontefract after his opposition to Edward II. He was to become a cult figure after his death and an unofficial saint.

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society.

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Our website: www.camdenhistorysociety.org

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No 238
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The Life of John Harrison – clockmaker

Thurs. 18 March, 7.30pm

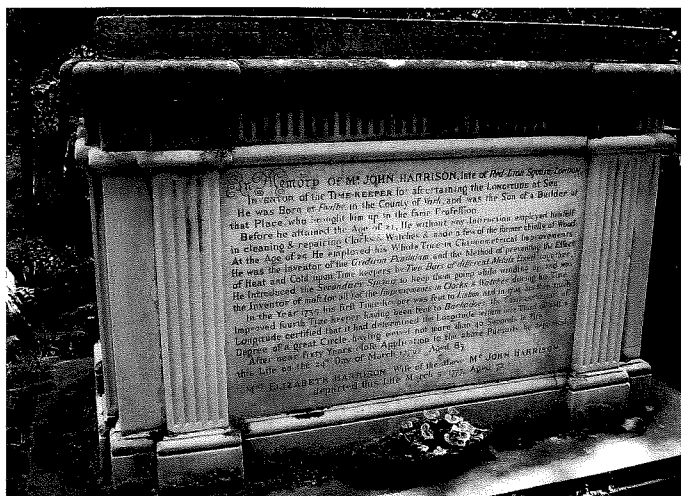
Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street, NW1
(opposite the Roundhouse)

The subject of our talk this evening is John Harrison (1693-1776), a clockmaker who lived in his later life in Red Lion Square and who is buried in Hampstead churchyard beneath one of the most handsome, heavily engraved chest tombs there.

Harrison's famous invention of a marine chronometer which would allow seamen to establish longitude, and his subsequent battle to claim the prize offered for this, was a story told tellingly, if rather over-dramatically, in Dava Sobel's book, *Longitude: The True story of a lone genius who solved the greatest scientific problem of his time*. Surprisingly, it was a best-seller and was even made into a television programme.

A Foundation has recently been formed to celebrate Harrison's life and our speaker this evening is horologist, Andrew King, a member of the Foundation.

John Harrison's tomb in Hampstead churchyard



Old Holborn Revisited

Thurs 15 April, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

A small research team of the Society, led by Steve Denford, has completed a mammoth revision of this book describing the oldest built area of Camden. The first edition was published in 1999 and has long been out of print, though available to be downloaded from our website. This event in April will describe the resources that have more recently become available to local history researchers and what has emerged from their use. Some of the most colourful characters, many prominent on the national stage, in Camden's history lived in this area and some of the most picturesque buildings in Camden are still to be seen and enjoyed there.

Things to Come

Please note the following in your diary:

27 May: Howard Spencer on the history of London's Blue Plaques. At Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre. (PLEASE NOTE: this is a change of date from the last Newsletter)

Wed. 23 June: AGM and Professor Sir David Cannadine on Winston Churchill, Anglo-America and the 'special relationship'. At Burgh House (PLEASE NOTE: This is a change of date from the last Newsletter)

15 Jul: Robin Woolven on Repairing Camden's World War II damage. At Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre.

16 Dec: Ann Saunders on The Merchant Taylors' Feast. At Burgh House

LIBRARY CLOSURE

Just in case this *Newsletter* should reach you in time-Holborn Library, and therefore the Local Studies and Archives Centre, will be closed from Monday 8 March for improvements to the library. It will reopen on Monday 15 March.

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PLEASE SEE PAGE TWO FOR BARGAIN OFFERS OF PUBLICATIONS ON OUR WEBSITE!!

Bargain Books

We are at the moment, via our website, offering many of our celebrated publications (including ones that have won the LAMAS prize) at bargain prices. These can be bought either using PayPal, if you have a PayPal account, or quoting your credit card details on the 'checkout' page if you don't. Prices have been reduced from as much as £11.95 to as little as £2; the new prices are shown on the Publications page. To this is added the standard packing and postage charge of £2.50 but this remains the same however many books you order at the same time. The offer is open at least until the AGM in June, and may be extended for the rest of 2010 if there is sufficient demand. A wonderful way of stocking up on birthday or occasional presents!

In addition, you can also order sets of five successive issues of the *Camden History Review* for a total of £2, again for this year only. This will enable you, perhaps, to complete your collection of Reviews without inordinate expense.

Membership Reminder

All Membership matters are now handled by Dr Henry Fitzhugh, 56 Argyle Street, WC1H 8ER (tel: 020 7837 9980; email: henryfitzhugh@talktalk.net). Subscriptions are due on 1 March; members who do not pay by standing order should pay by cheque to that address if they have received a subscription invoice with their *Newsletter*. We would be extremely grateful if anyone paying by cheque would fill out the Standing Order Mandate and the Gift Aid Declaration at the same time. The May *Newsletter* will only be sent if subscriptions have been received by 25 April.

Jewish Affairs

The extended Jewish Museum in Albert Street, Camden Town is reopening on 17 March. It received a Heritage Lottery Fund grant of £4.2 million in 2005 and it closed in September that year so that work could begin. It has now taken over a disused factory next door.

Exhibits include a 13th-century mikveh (a ritual bath), discovered in the City of London in 2001. On show will be rare and beautiful ceremonial objects including silver Torah scrolls made by George III's silversmith, and religious textiles commissioned by the Mocatta family.

Also, there is an interesting series of walks devoted to Jewish themes advertised on the website www.goeastlondon.co.uk. A good number relate to the East End and the City, but on Sunday 21 March Jewish Hampstead is explored. This may be booked (£8) by telephoning 020 8346 8560.

Richard Knight

Members will be sorry to hear that Richard Knight, who has been head of Camden Local Studies and Archives for a good number of years, is taking early retirement in March. He has been with Camden for 35 years and has spent most of his professional career in local studies. He will be much missed. He is regarded both in his own department and elsewhere in London's archive community, as highly competent and hardworking. The person now to be in overall charge of Local Studies, who is yet to be appointed, will almost certainly have no experience in the field.

This is a sequel to the 'Library Cuts' saga, detailed in this *Newsletter* and the press. His 'retirement' comes about after an official Council report sought to increase the number of users of library services and to cut costs at the same time. The fact that Richard headed the one department of the library service which had actually already increased the number of users, seems not to have impressed those who made the final decision.

More will be said about this at the AGM in June. Meanwhile, we send Richard our best wishes and our thanks for his co-operation over the years.

John Sperr

John Sperr, who died in February, was owner of Fisher and Sperr bookshop in Highgate Village. He ran it by himself, certainly since the 1950s, because I can remember going in there in 1956. It was the very epitome of a good second-hand bookshop – an enormous stock in a very old, many-roomed building, with everyday books to fine bindings. John was working up to January when he slipped on ice, hurt a hip and needed hospital treatment – he died there from pneumonia. What I hadn't realised, until I went to his funeral, was that he was 96 years old. He had of course aged over the past few years and was increasingly deaf, but to continue at that age as a shopkeeper with all of the time restrictions that are imposed, is a remarkable achievement.

Sadly, the shop is not being sold as a going concern – indeed it is doubtful if any second-hand bookshop is a going concern nowadays. Highgate, alas, will lose one of its special features.

John Richardson

Visit to Apothecaries Hall

There is still room for people who would like to go on the tour of Apothecaries' Hall on 16th April, advertised in the last *Newsletter*. It begins at 11am and will end at 1pm. The tour will assemble outside the entrance in Black Friars Lane at 10.45. The nearest tube station is Blackfriars, though it is an easy walk from St Paul's station on the Central Line. The cost is £5 per member. If you wish to go please contact Peter Woodford – his details are on p4 of this *Newsletter*.

The Hampstead Book: the A-Z of its history and people

by *Steven Denford*, 144pp, 160 ills, 245 x 185mm paperback, £14.50
Historical Publications, ISBN 978-1-905286-33-1

It is such a pleasure to pick up and read a history book that is so well balanced in its information, so readable, well illustrated and above all – accurate. Steve Denford has even managed to summarise the most complicated estate and building histories in a way that is understandable and easy to follow without removing important information. He has brought to life the atmosphere and unique characteristics of Hampstead including information on so many of the people who lived here in the past. Writers, actors, artists, architects, pop stars and many others made Hampstead their home and adequate space has been given to them and their achievements.

It is a book that you may pick up to check for information on one subject but it is then almost impossible not to be sidetracked and follow up many more entries. The contents of the useful A-Z entries use bold type in the text for people, places, subjects, etc where more information can be found under those headings elsewhere in the book. A good, full index also enhances any search for information.

The coverage includes the whole of the area which was formerly the Hampstead borough up to the 1965 amalgamation into Camden, not just Hampstead Town. Of particular value has been the effort to include so much up-to-date information in the entries on places and people, which certainly helps make it such a useful source for understanding the locality and changes that have occurred up to the present time.

The book certainly stirred my own memory on many occasions and I indeed well recall the publicity when Ian Norrie placed the delightful sign on his High Hill Bookshop, "Children of Progressive Parents admitted only on Leads". Many of Camden's children's librarians at the time really wanted that displayed in their libraries too!

Not a correction but additional information on one of the entries – Hampstead Football Club. Over time there has been, confusingly, at least four clubs with that name. Certainly one of them became Harlequins Rugby club as the book describes. However another of them became Hendon Football Club, which was founded in 1908 as Christchurch Hampstead Football Club, but between 1926-1930s was simply called Hampstead Football Club. I also have a 1903 photograph of another Hampstead Football Club

which certainly seems to be a football rather than rugby club.

Don't just give this as a present to someone but make it an essential publication for your own bookshelf.

Malcolm Holmes

Hand in hand with time. A memoir

by *Ken Gay*, 286pp, 64 ills, 215 x 136mm paperback £14.99
Honeysuckle Books ISBN 978-0-9562659-0-6

Ken Gay is a member of our Society, but he is identified with the Hornsey Historical Society, of which he has been chairman and is now president. A good proportion of that Society's publications derives from Ken's research.

Now in his 86th year, Ken has written his memoir, from his upbringing in West Ham, the LSE, work with the National Coal Board, and writing for 30 years for *Films and Filming*.

Ken first became involved with the Hornsey society in 1976, just as interest in local history was growing virtually everywhere in London. The sweeping up after the war, and the wholesale redevelopments that replaced bombed areas or, less justifiably often, what councils thought of as sub-standard housing, brought about a movement that said enough is enough. Conservation worries underpinned local history societies. Hornsey was fortunate in having Bridget Cherry (later to be editor of the Nikolaus Pevsner *Buildings of Britain* series) and Dr Joan Schwitzer amongst its founder members. Ken enthusiastically became the Society's publications editor.

His enthusiasm for the Hornsey Society and the work he has done for it cannot be overestimated.

Copies of the book may be obtained from Honey-suckle Books, 201 Alexandra Park Road, N22 7BJ (£16.50 inc. postage)

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN HAMPSTEAD

An interesting exhibition is now on at Hampstead Museum at Burgh House on aspects of religious freedom in Hampstead. The 'religious freedom' in the title is that granted to Non-conformists from 1664 to worship as they pleased – Rosslyn Chapel in the High Street was one of the places of worship that became prominent in Hampstead.

The exhibition runs until 2 May.

Plus and Minus

The latest newsletter of the Camden Railway Heritage Trust, summarises the successes and failures since the formation of the Trust.

Downsides have been the expansion of retail outlets in the Camden Catacombs and the demolition of the platform architecture at Primrose Hill station. More promisingly, Associated Press have improved the look of the Interchange Warehouse, and the Primrose Hill Tunnel east portals have been upgraded to Grade II*. Also, the reincarnation of the upper floor of the Horse Hospital has revealed more of the character of the building.

New members are welcome. Email crht@aol.com

ARLINGTON HOUSE

Enda Hughes is directing a documentary film on the history of Arlington House in Camden Town, and is looking for anyone who may have super 8 home movie footage of the Camden Town area from 1950-80s. If you have any, please contact endaj@yahoo.com or phone 07802 552581.

SPECTACULAR MAPS

Our member Peter Barber, head of map collections at the British Library, is curating an exhibition entitled *Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda and Art* there. These will include 80 of the most impressive wall-maps ever created, dating from 200AD to the present

day, most of which have never been displayed before. The exhibition opens on 30 April and runs until 19 September. More details will appear in the next *Newsletter*.

YORK HOUSE SCHOOL

From Claire Roffe:

I am on the Centenary Committee for York House School. Now based in Rickmansworth, Herts, we are trying to find as many 'Old Yorkists' as possible to invite them back to their old school.

York House School was started in 1901 by the Reverend Hawkins, at 98 Broadhurst Gardens, Hampstead, moving in 1928 to 1 Crediton Hill and in 1937 to 98 Maresfield Gardens. In 1939 it moved to Moneyhill in Rickmansworth.

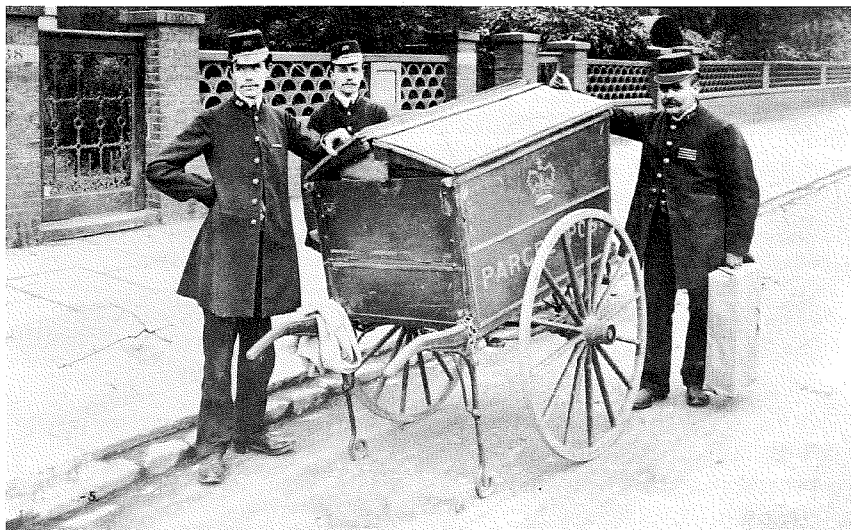
'Old Yorkists' may contact Ms Roffe on paul.claire@ukonline.co.uk, or via the school on 01923 772395.

VICTORIAN ARTISTS OF CAMDEN SQUARE

Camden Square was home to many artists, painters, engravers and sculptors, well known in their day but almost forgotten now.

An exhibition of artists living there before the First World War is the subject of an exhibition at Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre, Holborn Library, from Monday, 12 April to Saturday, 26 June.

A reminder of more relaxed days – parcel post delivery c.1905.



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The History of Blue Plaques in London

Thurs. 27 May, 7.30pm
Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street
NW1 (road opposite the Roundhouse)

There are thousands of plaques in London of which 800 are Blue Plaques. Easy to find in affluent areas, they also appear in the most unlikely streets. And they do not just feature indigenous people, but many foreign nationals, some of whom spent penurious times in London. Sir David Hare, in unveiling a plaque to the photographer Lee Miller and the Surrealist Sir Roland Penrose in 2003, described a blue plaque as 'the only distinction that anybody really wants in life', noting that the great thing about it is that they never know they have it.

The scheme perhaps began with a speech in the House of Commons in 1863 by William Ewart, who suggested a system of inscribing 'on those houses in London which have been inhabited by celebrated persons, the names of such persons'. It was also fondly hoped that by erecting a plaque the house itself might be saved from demolition, but this proved unfounded when the Society of Arts placed a plaque for Sir Joshua Reynolds on 47 Leicester Square as early as 1869, and although this probably delayed demolition, it did not stop it for the house went in 1937. The Society continued its good work until 1901 when the LCC, pushed by their Statistical Officer, Sir Lawrence Gomme, became the main provider and remained so until its abolition, when the Greater London Council took over. Since that Council's abolition, Blue Plaques have been the responsibility of English Heritage, though numerous borough councils and private organisations and individuals have also added plaques to people they think neglected by the 'official' scheme.

Our talk in May is by Howard Spencer, historian at English Heritage, and very much involved in the historical research to make sure that a plaque is placed on the right property.

The AGM and Sir David Cannadine

Wed. 23 June, 6.30pm
Burgh House, New End Square, NW3

Our 40th AGM will welcome the historian Sir David Cannadine as our guest speaker. Sir David has written numerous books – most notably *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* – and has broadcast many times. He is general editor of the Penguin *History of Europe* series, and is Chair of the National Portrait Gallery. His talk in June will be on Winston Churchill, Anglo-America and the 'special relationship'.

Wine etc will be available at 6.30pm and the AGM itself will be at 7. The talk will commence at about 7.30.

You are invited to nominate officers and members of our Council. Present occupants are as follows:

PRESIDENT: Prof. Caroline Barron
VICE PRESIDENTS: Malcolm Holmes, Dr Ann Saunders and Gillian Tindall
CHAIRMAN: John Richardson
VICE-CHAIRMAN: Christopher Wade
SECRETARY: Jane Ramsay
TREASURER: Dr Henry Fitzhugh
PUBLICATIONS EDITOR: Dr Peter Woodford
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PUBLICITY OFFICER: Vacant
LOCAL STUDIES LIAISON: Tudor Allen or his deputy
AUDITOR: Vacant

Council Members: Sheila Ayres, Steven Denford, Ruth Hayes, Lester May, Clare Melhuish, Jeremy Noble, Michael Ogden, Susan Palmer.

The Society's Website

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buy our publications online • check on events to come and past • download currently out-of-print publications • consult index to our Review and Newsletter • access to Hampstead Court Rolls • view sample pages from our publications

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The Annual Outing

Our Annual Outing will be on Friday 6 August, and will go to Finchcocks Musical Museum and to Goudhurst in Kent. The cost will be £29.50, to include coach, admission and tea.

We shall spend the first part of our day at Goudhurst, a typical Wealden Kent village, with traditional weatherboarded and tile-hung houses along the High Street. Its prosperity rested on farming, including hops, iron and weaving. We hope to be able to visit the church, which is a mixture of dates and styles, but is mainly 15th century. There is a slight Camden connection in that Gerald Charles Dickens, the actor and great-great grandson of the writer, lives here. Coffee will be available (not included in the cost) and there will be time for an early lunch if you wish. At 1.15pm we move on to Finchcocks, on the outskirts of the village, where you can eat sandwiches, or obtain tea and coffee. (As we are going on a day when the house is not open to the public, full meals are not available.)

Finchcocks is a fine Georgian manor, completed in 1725 with an impressive brick frontage attributed to Thomas Archer (architect of Thomas Archer House in King Street, Covent Garden and of St John's Smith Square), in a beautiful garden and parklands. It houses a celebrated collection of over 100 historical keyboard instruments, over 40 of which are in full working order. Some of these will be demonstrated to us in a recital. There is also an exhibition of prints, music and ephemera relating to 18th- and 19th-century pleasure gardens. Tea will be provided before our return journey.

A booking form is enclosed with this *Newsletter* and you are welcome to bring friends.

Things to Come

Please note these dates in your diary:

15 July: Robin Woolven on Clearing and Repairing Wartime Camden. At a new venue, the Lumen at 88 Tavistock Place WC1.

21 October: Antony Clayton on Subterranean City: beneath the streets of London. At Burgh House.

16 Dec: Ann Saunders on The Merchant Taylors' Feast of 6 July 1607. At Burgh House.

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Archives for London are organising a seminar on Thursday 3 June (5.30-7.30), led by Janet Foster, on practical ways of collecting, managing and preserving your family history records.

Advance booking is essential to guarantee your place. Please contact Nicola.Avery@cityoflondon.gov.uk or 020 7332 3816. It will be at London Metropolitan Archives, 40 Northampton Road EC1. The event is free, but preference is given to members of AfL.

Richard Knight

As reported in our last *Newsletter*, Richard Knight, Head of the Local Studies and Archives Centre at Holborn Library, took 'early retirement' in March. The Society made him a presentation and also reiterated our appreciation and thanks for all the help he has given this Society over so many years.

As members will be aware, we were entirely opposed to Richard being obliged to leave, because there was no professional reason for it to happen – it was purely a cost-cutting exercise. We regard the action of the Council and its Chief Officer in the matter as unfair, shabby and unnecessary.

We do of course wish Richard good fortune in the future. We do not want to lose touch with him and your Council are recommending at the AGM that he be appointed as a member of the Council.

HIGHGATE CEMETERY

Those members who read their local newspapers will know that for years there has been, to put it diplomatically, some dispute between the organisations which looked after and promoted Highgate Cemetery. It always seemed an unnecessary proliferation of bodies to deal with an admirable task.

However, there is now to be one organisation and the Society has been asked to nominate a representative to the managing committee. We have chosen Malcolm Holmes, who has long had connection with the Cemetery and its history.

THE ILN ONLINE

The new website for the *Illustrated London News* contains 250,000 pages and three quarters of a million illustrations. However, initially it will be available only to libraries and institutions.

A MYSTERY BUS

Mr David Walmsley has emailed us:

'I am currently researching the history of a bus sold by Northampton Corporation Transport to an "Evans of Camden Town" to quote the disposal documents in 1945-6. (The vehicle ended up as a caravan on a leisure plot in South Essex from where it was recovered some years ago as a hulk and stored for eventual restoration.) However, I am unable to trace information regarding "Evans". Can any of your members help? Possibly he was an operator of coaches, or perhaps bought the vehicle for use as a caravan.

Any information members have should go to davidwalmsley@keme.co.uk.

IN MEMORY OF CHRISTOPHER

Your Council has decided that we will make an annual donation of £50 to the fund that supports the Victoria County History project, to mark our appreciation of our late President, Christopher Elrington, who spent much of his career involved in the VCH.

The secret history of Caen Wood Towers

There is at present much concern at a proposal to demolish Caen Wood Towers (nowadays called Athlone House) and replace it with an eccentric and large mansion for a very rich person. To be fair, Caen Wood Towers was itself an eccentric, large mansion for a very rich person, and just as overwhelming as the newly proposed version.

The house was erected for Edward Brooke, a dye manufacturer, in 1870, designed by Edward Salomons, on the site of Fitzroy Farm and Dufferin Lodge. Its location is east of Kenwood House, south of Hampstead Lane. During the First World War, it was used as a military convalescent hospital, and afterwards it was bought by Sir Robert Waley-Cohen, managing director of Royal Dutch Shell. He lived there until 1942 when it was once again requisitioned for war use – ostensibly again for a hospital. In 1948 it was taken over by the NHS, which renamed it Athlone House, and used it as a geriatric hospital until its closure some years back.

Helen Marcus, a Vice President of the Heath and Hampstead Society, has been researching its true function during the last war and below is a summary drawn from her article in her Society's *Newsletter* of January this year.

Only in the last year (2009) has the truth about the war time use been revealed: it was actually an intelligence base for the Royal Air Force, the existence of which was an Official Secret. This was discovered by RAF historian, Flight Lieutenant Dan Marshall. The use stemmed from the RAF Intelligence School, which moved to Caen Wood Towers in 1942. Described as the RAF's version of Bletchley Park, it was also the base for the top secret M19 unit, responsible for training RAF Intelligence Officers. From February 1943 the USA Air Force also taught there.

Details of activities are recorded in a bound volume prosaically titled Form 540, which was a daily log of how thousands of Officers were educated in analysis, escape and survival. They apparently used Hampstead Heath to sharpen their survival skills, building bivouacs and hunting rabbits. The officers who featured in the film *The Great Escape*, who dug their way out of Stalag Luft III, would have been trained there.

There are rumours that even after the RAF left, the tower may have been used by UK Intelligence to monitor the Russian Trade Delegation in Highgate.

Exhibitions Galore

There are several historically themed exhibitions of much quality on in London at the moment.

At the British Library is one entitled *Magnificent Maps: Power, Propaganda and Art*, curated by Society member, Peter Barber. This was noted in the previous *Newsletter* and it has also appeared in the press and on television since. It brings together 'some of the largest and most beautiful maps ever to have been created'. A number have never been exhibited before.

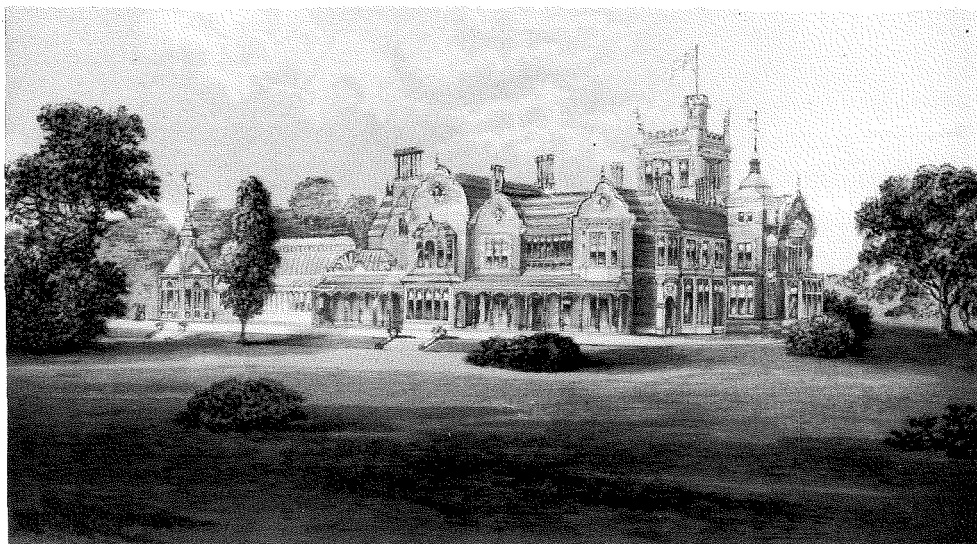
The maps appear not just in printed and manuscript forms, but as globes, coins, medals and posters, and the exhibition focuses on why these maps came to be created, and the powerful or subtle messages they contain.

The display features the earliest modern map of Italy of about 1450, and the map of the Magellan Strait of 1670 by Sir John Narbrough, which he presented to English royalty. Also on show is the first map of the United States 'produced by one man, and an American'.

The exhibition runs until 19 September.

At the Guildhall Art Gallery there are two exhibitions, One is on the postal history of the reign of

Caen Wood Towers, probably depicted c. 1871.

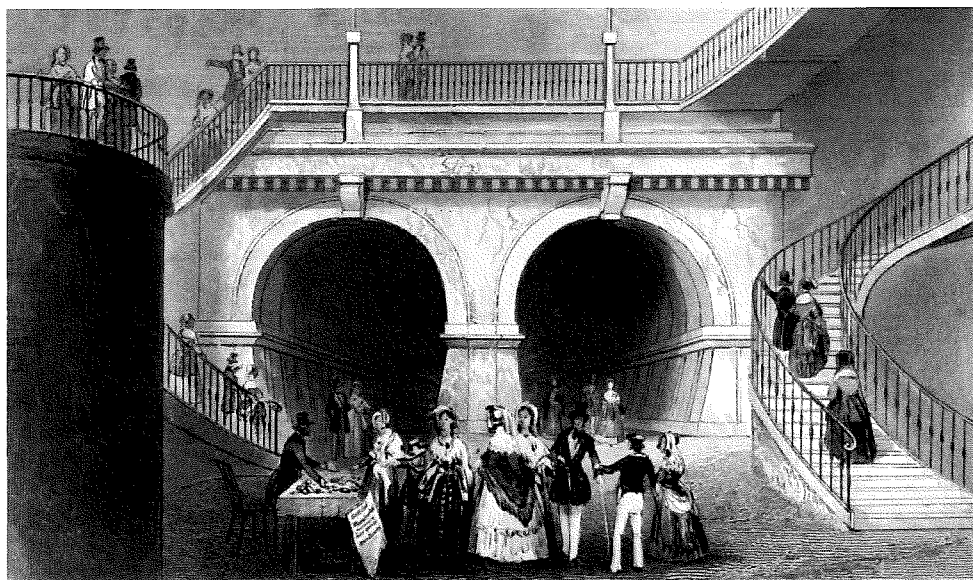


George V, and the other depicts the *Vanished Coaching Inns of the City of London*, based on a book of that name by Douglas Woodward. Both are well worth seeing and, as an extra, you can view for the first time, or again, the remains of Roman London's amphitheatre which are impressively displayed in the basement of the building.

And at the V & A is an excellent exhibition of Horace Walpole's furniture and effects that once ornamented his Gothic fantasy house, Strawberry Hill in Twickenham. This exhibition, which runs until 4 July, is a foretaste of the re-opening of the house later this year after extensive restoration.

Lastly, the Museum of London is opening its new Galleries of Modern London as from 28 May. They tell the story of London from 1666 to the present day. The whole thing, according to the publicity blurb, cost £20 million.

On 27 April this year the rather forgotten East London line was reopened through the Thames Tunnel built by the Brunels. The tunnel was completed in 1843, after substantial loss of life and many disasters. This print shows the tunnel when it was used by pedestrians, but it did not attract enough custom to make it viable and it was made into a rail tunnel and eventually incorporated into the overall underground railway system. The line will now act as a more useful connection between north and south London. Its northern route has been extended to Dalston and will soon interchange at Highbury & Islington with the Victoria line and London Overground (North London line). South of the river it stops, as it did before, at Rotherhithe where you can visit the Brunel Museum, and then goes on to Canada Water where you can interchange with the Jubilee Line to get to Docklands and Stratford. It is hoped that there will be floodlit slow train trips through the tunnel in September during London Open House days.



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The Treasurer and Membership Secretary is Henry Fitzhugh, 56 Argyle Street WC1H 8ER (email: henryfitzhugh@talktalk.net)

The Publications Secretary is Roger Cline, Flat 13, 13 Tavistock Place, WC1H 9SH, (7388 9889)

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Our website: www.camdenhistorysociety.org

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The Corpse, the Deception and the Levertons

Recently published is a book by Ben Macintyre, called *Operation Mincemeat*, which once again relates the story of how the Allies misled the Germans into believing that they would attack Greece, Sardinia or the south of France, rather than Sicily in the attempt to invade Southern Europe. The deception consisted of propelling the corpse of a homeless Welshman, Glyndwr Michael, towards the coast of Spain, with documents suggesting that it was that of a Major in the Royal Marines, and that the invasion was anywhere but Sicily.

Into this plot were drawn our local coroner, Sir Bentley Purchase, and the oldest established undertakers in Camden, Leverton's, who then were based in Eversholt Street. The ruse was successful and the Allies were able to land in Sicily, sustaining fewer casualties than if the enemy had been forewarned. The deception featured in a film of 1956 called *The man who never was*.

newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 240
Jul 2010

Clearing and repairing wartime Camden

Thurs. 15 July 7.30pm
The Lumen, 88 Tavistock Place, WC1

Our member, Robin Woolven, has been researching the events and after effects of the Second World War in Camden for some years. We are much indebted to him for his editing of the *London County Council Bomb Damage Maps 1939-45*, published by the London Topographical Society in 2005.

In July he will be turning his attention to the problems, frustrations and successes in clearing and repairing the damaged properties and possessions of the businesses and citizens of what is now Camden.

The meeting is in a new venue - Meeting Room 1, at The Lumen (address above). This is in the rebuilt United Reform church, at the extreme eastern end of Tavistock Place near the corner of Regent Square. It is easily reached on foot (8 mins) from bus stops on Gray's Inn Road, Tavistock Square or Euston Road or from King's Cross tube station.

The August Outing

There are still some places on the coach for this year's Outing on August 6 which, as detailed in the last *Newsletter*, is going to the pleasant village of Goudhurst in Kent, and then on to Finchcocks on the outskirts of the village, a fine Georgian manor house completed in 1725, that has a magnificent collection of keyboard instruments.

An application form was enclosed with the last *Newsletter*, but if you have mislaid this and want to go, please telephone Jean Archer on 020 7435 5490.

The Annual Meeting

A well attended Annual Meeting on 23 June heard Sir David Cannadine give an engrossing talk on Winston Churchill and the various stages of the 'Special Relationship' with the United States which pertained during and after the last war.

Officers and Council members elected were as follows:

PRESIDENT: Prof. Caroline Barron
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CHAIRMAN: John Richardson
VICE-CHAIRMAN: Christopher Wade
SECRETARY: Jane Ramsay
TREASURER: Dr Henry Fitzhugh
PUBLICATIONS EDITOR: Dr Peter Woodford
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Dr Henry Fitzhugh
RESEARCH TEAM LEADER: Steven Denford
PUBLICATIONS (Postal sales) Roger Cline
PUBLICATIONS (bookstall etc) Sheila Ayres
MEETINGS CO-ORDINATOR: Dr Peter Woodford
PUBLICITY OFFICER: Vacant
LOCAL STUDIES LIAISON: Tudor Allen or his deputy
EXAMINER OF ACCOUNTS: Roger Cline

Council Members: Sheila Ayres, Steven Denford, Ruth Hayes, Richard Knight, Lester May, Clare Melhuish, Jeremy Noble, Michael Ogden, Susan Palmer.

The minutes of the meeting, together with the accounts of the Society when fully signed off, will be posted on our website for those unable to attend.

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Things to Come

Please note these dates in your diary:

16 September: Alan Godfrey on Ordnance Survey maps. At The Lumen.

21 October: Antony Clayton on Subterranean City: beneath the streets of London. At Burgh House.

18 November: John Malpass on St Pancras Almshouses. At the Lumen.

16 Dec: Ann Saunders on The Merchant Taylors' Feast of 6 July 1607. At Burgh House.

20 January: Piers Wauchope on the Political History of Camden. At St Pancras Town Hall Council Chamber.

Frederick Cayley Robinson

The National Gallery will be staging an exhibition of four large paintings by Frederick Cayley Robinson from 14 July to 17 October. Robinson (1862-1927) was a resident of Hampstead, and these paintings, together called *Acts of Mercy*, were executed 1916-20 to illuminate scenes at the Middlesex Hospital during the First World War. The paintings are unusual and in the words of the press release, 'Their underlying message concerns the sanctity of human altruism expressed through medical healing and the care of orphaned children.'

When the Hospital was demolished in recent times the paintings were bought by the Wellcome Trust, where they are usually found on display.

A Myth in the Making

The *Jeremy Vine Show* on Radio Two on 26 May included a discussion of the minor controversy in the Plymouth area due to a proposal to name a small street after the late Michael Foot, a long-term MP in the area. There was a contribution from his great nephew who stated, without fear of contradiction, that Mr Foot had been so respected and influential that he had been able to have the street in Hampstead, in which he had lived for many years, renamed Pilgrims Lane, after the nickname of his beloved Plymouth Argyle football team.

Needs nipping in the bud immediately!

DOGS ON GUARD

Walter Edwin Brown, who was Chief Clerk to St Pancras Cemetery Department as from the late 19th century, recorded in his book, *Open Spaces and Disused Burial Grounds*, the story of a chimney sweep called Garratty, who occupied a small and disused Wesleyan Chapel near St Pancras Churchyard. When Garratty was very ill body-snatchers warned his wife that they would take his body as soon as he was dead and interred. The lady bravely got to know the vicious dogs used by the authority to guard graves so that she could herself help to guard her husband's grave until decomposition took place. This she did for nine nights following his interment.

The Oldest shop in Kentish Town

At no. 213 Kentish Town Road is a double-fronted clothes shop called Bluston's, which would seem unashamedly old-fashioned in a quiet country town, let alone in a London high street. My attention was brought to an article about the shop in the *World of Interiors* magazine issued in October 2001 - and little has changed since despite the passage of nine years. The author, Debbie Humphry, describes Bluston's as 'A mix of dusty grandeur and postwar common sense', and likens it to a black-and-white postcard picked up in a junk shop.

Despite a rather off-putting assessment of the wares available, it is an affectionate 3-page write up. The secret of its longevity, of course, is that the family owns the freehold. It began as a small trimming shop in the Twenties run by the grandparents of Michael Albert Bluston, the present owner. They built up a small chain of eight stores in north London and on Oxford Street, of which only the Kentish Town store remains. Almost certainly the shop will go out of existence with the present generation of owners. He says there are very few independent, family-owned clothes shops like this left because the youngsters don't want to run them. 'They're too educated to get an ordinary job.' None of his children wants the shop.

In its heyday, he says, the shop had seven sales assistants. Even in the Fifties young Michael's job was to stand by the locked entrance with a key, letting in two people at a time with their vouchers, monitoring the queue of ladies curling down the street. The point now for Bluston's customers, Ms Humphry says, is not to have what is fashionable, but to have what they've always had.

Two of the assistants in the shop when the article was written had worked there since before Michael was born, and the newest assistant had been there for a modest 35 years.

'They avoid nostalgia, revealing instead a curious timelessness: ornately railed, lurid green walls, a colour fashionable again; a pink, furry fleece nipped to a Fifties waist; a Thirties star clock glittering above, and to each side a pair of Sellotaped-up hard-wearing Seventies chairs.'

The article is a very good piece of social observation. We pay little attention to shops and their nature - I think the last time we mentioned any in this *Newsletter* was the closure of the stationer's Bishop & Hamilton, and Flint's the tool shop, both of which were also in Kentish Town.

If members want to record an old shop, closed or still open, please send in their reminiscences.

The Sydney Cook Era

Mark Swenarton writes:

This year sees the centenary of the birth of Sydney Cook (1910-79) who, as Camden's director of architecture from 1965 to 1973, 'put Camden on the map' with a series of innovative social housing projects designed by some of the most creative architects of the day. To mark the event, and as part of Mark Swenarton's ongoing historical research, an exhibition and symposium are being held at New London Architecture, Store Street, WC1, which all those with memories of, or an interest in, this exceptional housing programme are invited to attend. The exhibition will present a selection of the Camden projects with original photography by the acclaimed architectural photographer Martin Charles while a symposium – at which it is hoped many of those involved in the Cook programme will participate – will be video-recorded to form a historical record in its own right.

The projects initiated or built under Sydney Cook constitute not just the last great output of social housing in the UK, but also arguably the most substantial investigation into the architecture of social housing undertaken in the past half-century. The aim was not merely to meet pragmatic requirements but to establish a new kind of architecture based on a radical reinterpretation of traditional English urbanism. The outcome was a series of schemes

designed by in-house architects such as Neave Brown, Peter Tabori, and Gordon Benson and Alan Forsyth and by eminent private practitioners such as Colquhoun & Miller, Edward Culliman, Terry Farrell and James Stirling.

Many of the Camden projects were photographed at the time by Martin Charles and this has guided the choice of projects for the exhibition. They will include well-known projects by Neave Brown (Fleet Road, Alexandra Road), Peter Tabori (Highgate New Town and Polygon) and Benson & Forsyth (Lamble Street, Branch Hill, Maiden Lane) as well as lesser known projects such as Harmood Street (Alan Warman) and also projects by outside architects such as Colquhoun+Miller's Caversham Road/Gaisford Street.

Members, especially architects and others involved in the Camden housing programme in the Cook period, are invited to attend the symposium and to share their recollections of this extraordinary chapter in the history of housing.

To register your interest in attending please contact info@newlondonarchitecture.org.

Symposium: Saturday, 30 October 2-6pm
Exhibition: 30 October - 28 November at New London Architecture, Building Centre, 26 Store Street, WC1

The Alexandra Road development, designed by Neave Brown. Photo: Martin Charles.



Humph remembered

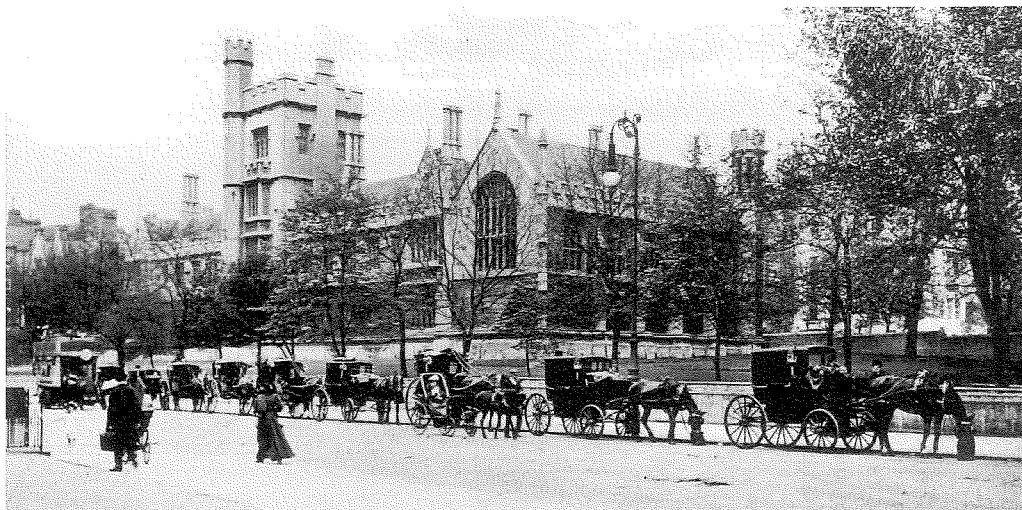
I was telephoned not long ago to ask if I had any suggestions for renaming a pub in Camden Town which was having a make-over. The pub is at the southern end of Camden High Street, on the west side, facing the Cobden Statue and near Mornington Crescent station. In its early 19th-century days it was called The Southampton Arms, to acknowledge the ground landlord of the area, the Southampton family. In recent years it was changed to The Crescent. I suggested that it should

be named after Humphrey Lyttelton, celebrated jazz musician and *aficionado* but more particularly, in this connection, chairman of the long-lasting radio panel game *I'm Sorry I haven't a Clue*. You would need to have been a hermit not to have heard its favourite game, *Mornington Crescent*, a seemingly rule-less, but somehow hilarious affair. It seemed an apt connection and it is now named The Lyttelton Arms. I would have preferred 'Humph's', but I'm happy to have his name more formally attached.

John Richardson



Above, Argyle Square, south of the Euston Road, early in the 20th century. Note the headquarters of the South St Pancras Liberal Unionist Association on the left. Below is New College at Swiss Cottage, now superseded by Northways. It was a short-lived theological college for Nonconformists, built in 1851. The building was taken down in 1934.



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newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

No 241
Sep 2010

The History and Use of Ordnance Survey maps

Thurs 16 September, 7.30pm

Charlie Ratchford Resource Centre, Belmont Street (road opposite the Roundhouse)

Alan Godfrey, our speaker in September, has for many years reprinted parts of old Ordnance Survey maps and sold them at modest prices. For this he has earned the gratitude of many. So we are pleased to welcome him to tell us more about the OS.

The word Ordnance is a clue to the project's origins – a military need to have accurate maps. In this case it dates back to the suppression of Scottish clans in the mid 1700s, and the labours of William Roy and David Watson. After Roy's leadership work proceeded in earnest in the 1790s using a new theodolite. The first one inch-to-the-mile map appeared early in the next decade.

Please note, the above venue is changed from that announced in the previous *Newsletter*.

Subterranean Secrets of London

Thursday 14 October, 7.30pm

Burgh House, New End Square NW3

All sorts of things are beneath our pavements, apart from the obvious gas, water, electricity and transport undertakings. And even these have changed dramatically since our speaker, Antony Clayton, first published his popular book *Subterranean City: Beneath the streets of London* ten years ago. The revised and much extended edition is due to be published in September and contains a wealth of new development.

Camden has a great deal of subterranean history. It includes the horse tunnels beneath Camden Goods

Yard, the Kingsway tram tunnel, the hidden lost rivers that rise in the north of the borough, the numerous underground railway (and main line) tunnels and the Pneumatic Despatch Railway – just some of the things that are bound to be covered in Antony Clayton's talk.

Please note – this is a change of date from that published in the last *Newsletter*.

Things to come

Please put the following talks in your diary:

Nov 18: *The many lives of the St Pancras Almshouses*, by John Malpass.

Dec 16: *A grand Merchant Taylors' feast in 1607*, by Dr Ann Saunders

Jan 20: *Highlights of the political history of Camden* by Piers Wauchope.

Feb 17: *Blitz boy in Camden*, by Bob Trevor

Mar 17: *The National Hospital, Queen Square* by Dr Gordon Plant.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

It would be useful if members who use email would communicate their email addresses to our Treasurer, Henry Fitzhugh (henryfitzhugh@talktalk.net) and our Secretary Jane Ramsay (jsramsay@tiscali.co.uk). This would enable us to get in touch with you if something urgent happens, such as the cancellation of a meeting etc and reduce the cost of sending out a circular letter. Many thanks.

HAMPSTEAD TUBE POSTERS

London's underground system has produced many memorable posters and none more so than in that heyday of poster design at the beginning of the 20th century.

We are reminded of this in an exhibition at Hampstead Museum at Burgh House of posters advertising the Hampstead Tube – now part of the Northern Line – which opened for business in 1907. It was originally

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intended to call Hampstead station Heath Street, and indeed a change of plan must have occurred rather late in the day, for the name Heath Street, in tiles, is still to be seen on the recently restored platform walls.

The exhibition runs until 19th November.

Memories of Bluston's, Kentish Town

From Malcolm Campbell:

The piece on Bluston's in the last *Newsletter* revived some memories for my wife and I. Some 60 or so years ago my wife, then a North-Western Polytechnic student, paused to look in Bluston's window. She was quickly seized upon by a gent and guided inside to the care of a very persistent lady. Nothing tempted Margaret at a price she could afford, but the only means of escape she could see was to leave a ten shillings deposit on a garment she did not want. Ten bob was not a negligible sum in those days for an unwaged student, but she never went back for it.

Around 40 years later I found in the Imperial War Museum an exhibition illustrating life in London in the last war. There, among such displays as an air raid shelter, I was amazed to come upon a mock-up of Bluston's shop front with, of course, clothing to match the period.

More recently, passing the shop, I chanced to see Maureen Lipman in the window area. The reason later became apparent when she appeared on television fronting a short feature on Bluston's and its history.

Bluston's is a true piece of Kentish Town folklore, and we shall miss it when it has gone.

Caen Wood Towers remembered

Billy Osborne writes:

In your article on Caen Wood Towers (*Newsletter* May) it is stated that the NHS used it as a geriatric hospital until its closure. That was not the whole story. It was used in the 1950s and 1960s as a convalescent home for the Middlesex Hospital in Mortimer Street. I myself was a patient there in 1962 for about ten days. I was then aged 25 and certainly no geriatric. The age of the patients was the same as the cross-section in the main hospital, where I had had surgery.

It was a lovely place to recuperate. It was slightly tatty but scrupulously clean. It had an empty 1920s concrete swimming pool set in what had obviously been well-kept sloping grounds, with views across the Heath. The peace and quiet all helped to bring to a successful conclusion the work of the surgeons.

This was a time when all functions of the NHS were carried out in-house. My uncle George, who was head Porter at the Middlesex, wore a frock coat with silver buttons and ran everything in front of house. The Matron was in full charge of everything that happened in wards.

I was actually born at the Middlesex. At the start of the war I was evacuated from the Children's Clinic that was in an adjoining Victorian workhouse, to a Middlesex Hospital Children's Home called 'The Holme' in Godmanchester near Huntingdon. In 1945, having returned to London, I broke my arm and the lack of room at the Middlesex meant that I was taken by ambulance to the Middlesex Hospital at Northwood in Buckinghamshire. Being 10 years old and being there for over a month I became a sort of mascot to the wounded servicemen who made up the best part of the prefabricated ward. Among them was an airman who was undergoing an experimental graft involving his badly burnt hand. A submariner had to sleep outside as he was suffering from claustrophobia as well as wounds to both his legs - he used to call for a nurse by blowing a bugle.

The LAMAS Conference

This year's local history conference is on 27 November and its theme is '*London Under Attack: Wars and Insurrections*'. It will be held at the Museum of London in the newly-refurbished Weston Theatre and the Clore Learning Centre. Tickets are £10 each including tea. These can be booked online at www.lamas.org.uk or ask Jane Ramsay (address on page 4) for a booking form.

DISCOVERIES AT CAMDEN GOODS YARD

The Camden Railway Heritage Trust is still pressing for the retention and restoration of a number of features in the old Camden Goods Yard off Chalk Farm Road. The complex of horse stables, for example, appears to be the most complete in London, and probably in the country. English Heritage is currently considering its redesignation, the basis of which would be the quality, coherence and the nature of its facilities. They provide an example of the role played by horses in our industrial past.

Stables were also built for Gilbey's by the North London Railway under the arches at Camden Road station, opening on to Bonny Street. Some evidence of these remains. They could accommodate about 100 horses. At the peak, some 700-800 horses worked in the Goods Depot.

More can be learned from Peter Darley on 7586 6632

A vicar's notes on the Blitz

Peter Daly recently came across in the London Metropolitan Archives a wartime register of church services at St Andrew's, Malden Road, Kentish Town, a church that no longer exists. However the vicar of the time, the Rev. Roland Genet Stafford (1870-1953) also added some observations on the Blitz, then at its height.

25 August 1940:

Heavy air raid during night. Service shortened owing to risk of raid.

1 September 1940:

Today 'all clear' sounded 4am. Went to bed, never woke until 10.30 to scramble down to the 11am service. Warning again sounded before we had reached the Creed. Closed service at once with invitation to receive from the reserved sacrament.

26 September 1940:

Last night was the worst night we have ever had, which no one expected to survive.

6 November 1940:

Too dark, with bombardment. Must forego 7am service for the time being. Church further damaged. West End windows and roof.

17 November 1940:

Raid warning went just as choir and celebrant entering - hymn, communion from reserved sacrament, sanctus and blessing only. First service in Lady Chapel, successfully blacked-out, owing to shattered West End window.

16 April 1941:

Terrible night of heavy bombing, much local damage plus loss of life. Out at 5am, toured the neighbourhood and general committals on victims sites.

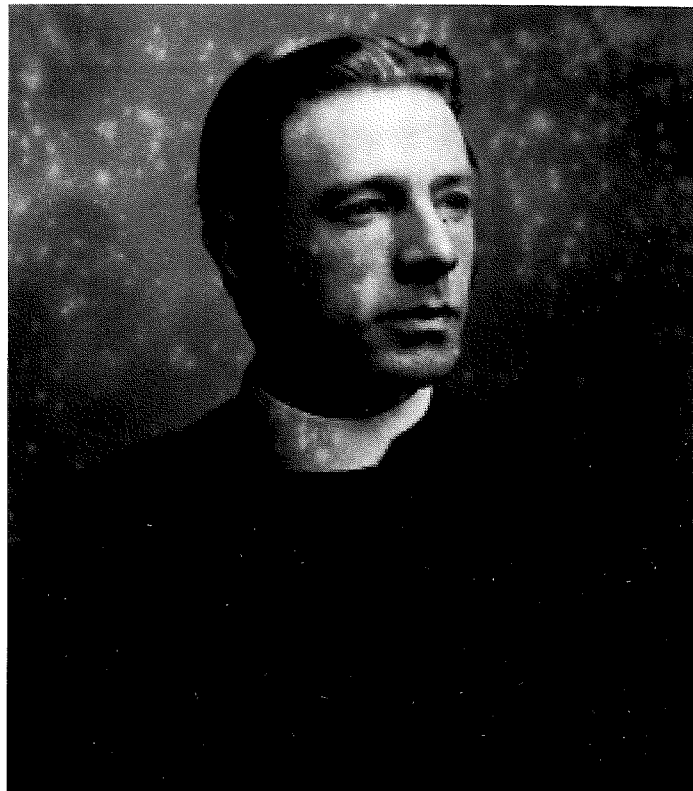
11 May 1941:

Overnight south side windows badly blown out. Church inches deep in dust, side chapel very bad. No service possible. Communicants, after a sleepless night, set about clearing sanctuary and choir.

This marked the end of the main Blitz on London: three years of relative calm followed before the emergence of flying bombs in 1944.

Father Stafford wrote a melancholy comment during this period, on Christmas Day 1942. 'As an expression of thanksgiving for recent successes on our own battle fronts sanction was given by the Government to use bells from 9am to midday. Owing to inability to secure ringers very few peals were rung, but most bells were chimed. Owing to rust, after fruitless efforts, we were not able to even avail ourselves of this privilege.'

The end of the war passed without comment and Father Stafford appears to have conducted his last service at St Andrew's on 16 September 1945; the entries for the following two Sundays simply read 'No services. vicar unwell'. St Andrew's itself survived until 1953 when it was closed down and demolished, in part because of the damage it had



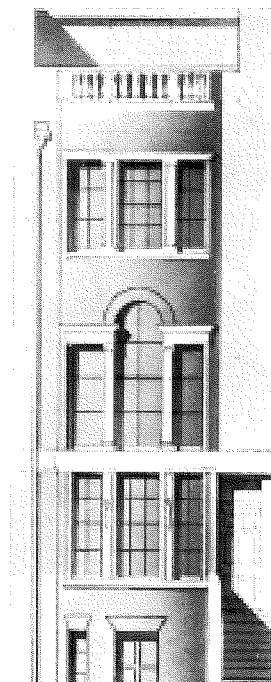
suffered through the bombing.

Editor's Note: Father Stafford was previously at St George's-in-the-East in Cannon Street Road in 1900-04. Fortunately that church and their minister Michael Ainsworth take their archives seriously and were able to find a picture of Fr Stafford of about the time that he was there.

The Little Georgian House

Amongst my books I came across a booklet I had forgotten about. *The Story of The Little Georgian House and its neighbours* by F E Hansford. No publishing date is on the booklet, but I assume it was in the 1950s since it refers to the Queen's forthcoming post-Coronation drive along the Euston Road. The publishers were the car dealers, Car-Mart, who had just restored the house, and I can vaguely recall that the husband of a 1950s mayor of St Pancras, Cllr Grace Lee, was a senior partner of the firm. But I might be wrong in that memory.

The official modern address of the house (pictured right) was 318 Euston Road, but its original address was 4 Bath Place. It was part of a row of houses that lay on the north side of Euston Road, just west of Tottenham Court Road.



The author reprints the contents of a letter from Queen Victoria's Secretary to the Master of the Horse, directed at St Pancras Vestry Clerk, which reads as follows:

'I am directed by the Master of the Horse to acquaint you that on the occasion of the Queen's journey to Scotland on the 17th instant, Her Majesty will pass from Baker Street, along the New Road, to the Great Northern Railway, and I am to call your attention to the dangerous state of the thoroughfare from Euston Square to King's Cross, in order that the necessary

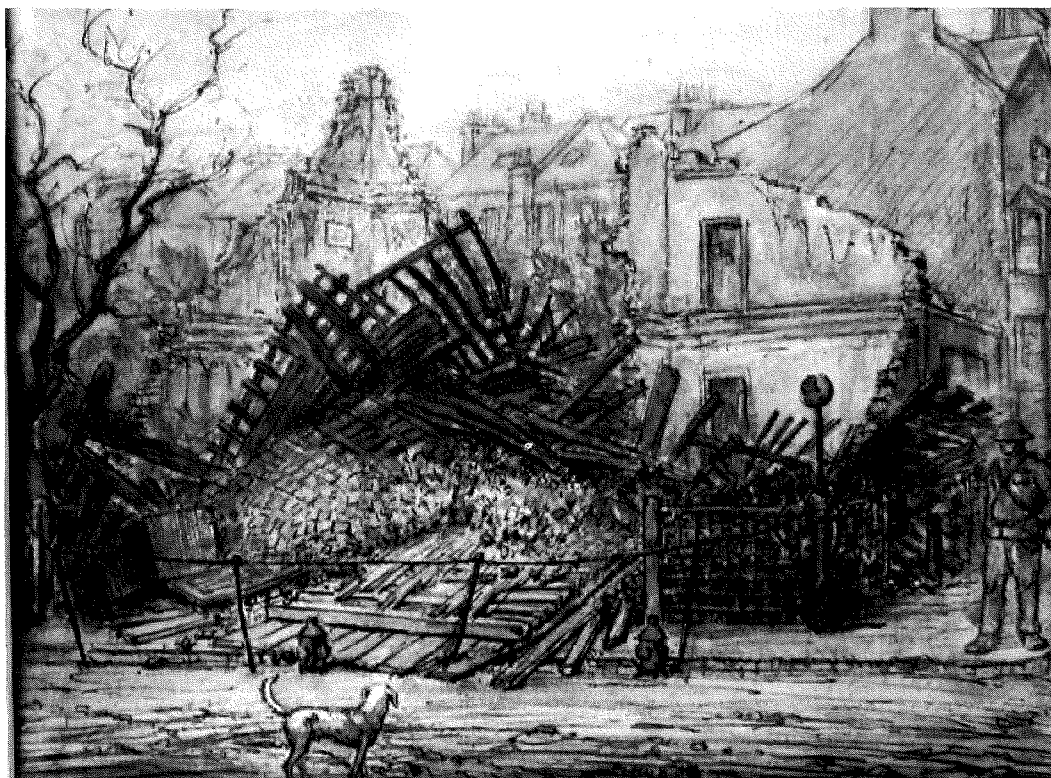
steps may be taken to put it in a proper and safe condition by the day before mentioned.'

No doubt the New (Euston) Road was repaired and occupants of Bath Place were able to see the Queen from their windows.

However, despite the restoration of the house by Car-Mart, the property was later demolished during the widening of Euston Road for the underpass.

John Richardson

A Bomb in Willoughby Road



Those members who have been to the house of Christopher Wade, our Vice-Chairman, in Willoughby Road, Hampstead will know that it is a post-war house set amongst other much older and original houses of the road. They would be right in assuming it might be a result of bomb damage. Above is a painting of the original house, just after it was bombed in October 1940. The picture was included in a recent exhibition of works by Percy Smith at the Hampstead Museum – the artist lived nearby at 43 Rudall Crescent.

No 28 then belonged to Dr Basil Haskins, a popular Hampstead GP. Fortunately he and his wife and his housekeeper were all out when the bomb fell. The only casualty was Mrs Haskins' dog. Note the ARP Warden and what looks like a Belisha Beacon – possibly a sign for Dr Haskins' surgery? All the debris was cleared away before 8am the following day. A large static water tank was erected on the site. A new 28 Willoughby Road (and a 28a) was built on the site in 1956 and Christopher and Diana Wade were the first occupants.

This Newsletter is published by the Camden History Society.

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newsletter

of the CAMDEN HISTORY SOCIETY

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Nov 2010

The many lives of the St Pancras Almshouses

Thurs. 18 November 7.30pm
The Lumen, 88 Tavistock Place WC1

John Malpass, current Treasurer of the St Pancras Almshouses in Maitland Park Road, has researched the history of the almshouses from their first location (1778) at the site of the modern Camden Town tube station via a site adjacent to Old St Pancras churchyard up to the laying of the foundation stone of the present buildings in 1859, on land owned by the Fitzroy/Southampton family. John's article in the 2010 edition of the *Camden History Review* (enclosed with this *Newsletter*) records contemporary accounts of the horrendous conditions in workhouses in St Pancras and elsewhere up until the late 19th century. This promises to be a gruesome story with a happy ending.

The venue - Me rebuilt United F end of Tavisto Square. It is eas stops on Gray's Road or from K

Correction: the venue

for 18th November is

Charlie Ratchford Centre,

Belmont Street, NW1.

A grand Merchant Taylors' Feast in 1607

Thurs. 16 December, 7.00pm
Burgh House, New End Square NW3

Feasts and festivals in the 16th and 17th centuries could be very grand affairs indeed, costing the equivalent of tens of thousands of pounds in modern currency. Dr Ann Saunders, our Vice-President, will describe this event in mouth-watering detail. As is customary, at the meeting nearest to Christmas, seasonal refreshments will be served as from 7pm and the talk begins at 7.30pm.

Things to come:

Please put these dates in your new diaries:

Jan 20: *Highlights of the political history of Camden* by Piers Wauchope.

Feb 17: *Blitz boy in Camden*, by Bob Trevor

Mar 17: *The National Hospital, Queen Square* by Dr Gordon Plant.

Apr 14: *The Eyre Estate in St John's Wood and Camden*.

May 19: Details to be announced

Jun 23: *The history and restoration of Kentish Town Baths*.

Jul 21: *English Heritage Listing in Camden*.

Staffing at the Local Studies Centre

We await with some trepidation what the cuts to local government finance will do to Council services and in particular to libraries and especially the Local Studies and Archives Centre in Holborn. As members will recall we protested long and hard against the enforced early retirement of the Head of Local Studies, Richard Knight, but without success. The staffing at the Centre is now what was proposed in the Council's 'Grow your Library' document. It is as follows:

In overall charge (but with responsibilities in other parts of the library service) is Steve Lack, with the rather forbidding job title of Service Delivery Manager.

At enquiry desk level we have Aidan Flood who generally looks after the local studies library and search room (and specialises in the illustration collection), and Tudor Allen who is Archivist but also shares management with Aidan but mainly looks after the archives.

Then we have, working a variety of hours, several 'Customer Service Officers' who manage to rise above such a bland job description. These are Lesley Marshall, Ingrid Smits, Kate Brolly, Rachel Dilworth and Ami Sekhon. Still in place is Maryte Medelis who is part-time Conservator.

The Society's Website

www.camdenhistorysociety.org

buy our publications online • check on events to come and past • download currently out-of-print publications • consult index to our Review and Newsletter • access to Hampstead Court Rolls • view sample pages from our publications

BARGAIN OFFERS FOR OUR PUBLICATIONS ARE ON OUR WEBSITE!!

Caen Wood Towers and The Little Georgian House remembered

In our last *Newsletter* we published memories of Caen Wood Towers (now Athlone House) by Billy Osborne, and a piece about the Georgian House in Bath Place, Euston Road. Mrs K Turner has responded about both of these buildings:

'I knew that Caen Wood Towers had been a convalescent home for some time when I was young and years later the modern unit at the entrance to the estate was used for two-day courses where trainee care workers, student nurses and social workers received instruction. As a disabled carer of a disabled spouse I was asked to speak to the participants about our experiences on several occasions. As we lived locally to the Middlesex Hospital and I often had to attend there, I knew Billy Osborne's uncle well by sight. He was a very dapper man and attracted a lot of attention with his smart uniform.

I was born at the Middlesex in the Victorian workhouse [see elsewhere on this page]. While the wing housing the maternity unit was being rebuilt in the late 1920s they used the old institution for a few years. I did not know that it had been a children's home. I discovered very recently that it had been a workhouse originally – I can only assume that my parents had been embarrassed by the fact and did not want to tell me! Like Billy, I spent some time at Northwood (Mount Vernon). I had my tonsils removed there in 1945 and slept in a long ward named HMS Ajax – very cold and draughty. An elderly matron patrolled the wards every evening, walking with a stick but pulled along by a very large bulldog.

The article about the house in Bath Place also brought back memories. When the building was first revealed my father was very surprised – he had no idea that the house was there and he had lived in or around Warren Street most of his life. As a child, going to shop with my mother in Seaton Place Market, I was always fascinated by the miniature electric cars in the windows of Car Mart. They cost about £20 in the 1930s and that seemed a fortune to me.'

Billy Osborne also writes:

I was evacuated in August 1940 from William Road in a house right next door to Oetzmann's furniture store, which then stood on the corner of Hampstead Road. We also backed onto a paint factory in Drummond Street.

My father was the first on the scene with a stirrup-pump when Oetzmann's was incendiary bombed. With furniture and wood all around him and a building full of paint and inflammable spirit next door he rushed up to the roof with his little pump and bucket of water to tackle the problem and held the fort until the fire brigade arrived. Just one of thousands of unsung heroes of the Blitz.

Athlone House

Caen Wood Towers (see previous column), is now called Athlone House. It is a remarkable building on the north ridge, east of Kenwood House, and is again under threat. Despite a previous application to demolish it and replace it with a new luxury house, much larger than the present one, being firmly turned down by Camden Council, an appeal has been lodged which will go to an enquiry.

Opposition to this has been launched by the Highgate Society and the Heath and Hampstead Society. The Camden History Society has also written to the appropriate person to protest at this new application which seeks to replace a spectacular Victorian house by an oversized one built to attract petrodollars.

Some of the interior views of Athlone House may be seen on the Highgate Society website.

Old workhouse under threat

Ruth Richardson writes to urge support to save the Strand Union Workhouse in Cleveland Street, which is under imminent threat of demolition. There is no other Georgian purpose-built workhouse surviving in the London region as far as she is aware. The building has stood since the 1780s through different regimes of poor law provision, and right through to the NHS era when it became eventually an outpatients' wing for the Middlesex Hospital. The building has an extraordinary history – much of it painful – but it does not deserve to be demolished without a fight. It is a sturdy edifice, and with a good architect could easily be re-cast for modern housing, or office use.

If you're interested please take a look at the website www.workhouses for details about how to help – just a letter to English Heritage, head of designations Dr Roger Bowdler, would be wonderful, because it is not yet even listed, and the owners want to demolish it fast, just as they have the Middlesex Hospital, which is like a great open bombsite next door.

London Historians

Mike Paterson writes:

'I recently started London Historians as an all-of-London association for those interested in the city's history. Our website is www.londonhistorians.org (still quite rudimentary, but there's plenty in the pipeline), and we also have a monthly e-newsletter. One of my key objectives is to involve all (or as many as possible) London local groups. I understand from colleagues in my own group (Brentford and Chiswick) that Camden is the biggest, most active, and the best! My main idea is to offer all members of local groups the equivalent of their annual subscription as a discount when they join LH, up to £10.'

A form to join London Historians is enclosed. Additional copies may be had by printing out from <http://bit.ly/dj7muP>. More information is on the website quoted above.

The 150th Anniversary of the Hampstead Junction Railway

Ed Humphreys writes:

The HJR opened on 2 January 1860 to link the North London Railway (NLR) at Camden Town with the North and South-West Junction Railway (NSWJR) at Willesden. It was promoted by the London & North Western Railway (LNWR) as a by-pass for its congested line between Chalk Farm and Willesden. The NLR had opened in 1850 between Bow and Camden Town, extended to a junction with the LNWR at Chalk Farm in 1851, mainly to provide access to the docks for the LNWR and traffic had grown considerably. The HJR was constructed mostly along the fringe of the then built-up area but could not avoid two expensive works: a long viaduct from Camden Town to Kentish Town through a heavily populated area, and Hampstead Tunnel – 1167 yards long with walled approach cuttings.

There were four stations originally: Kentish Town (now Gospel Oak), Hampstead Heath, Finchley Road (St John's Wood) and Edgware [*sic*] Road (Kilburn) later called Brondesbury. Kentish Town was renamed Gospel Oak in 1867 when a new station was opened on the viaduct at Prince of Wales Road. This was Kentish Town until 1924 when it became Kentish Town West. Other stations were added including West End Lane (1888) now called West Hampstead. Most stations had goods yards with significant coal traffic, which continued until the 1960s. Through goods traffic has always been important on the HJR and remains so today.

Passenger trains on the HJR were operated by the NLR which at first ran between Camden Town and Kew Bridge or Twickenham, connecting with NLR trains to Fenchurch Street at Camden Town. The NLR opened its Dalston-Broad Street line in 1865 and the basic service became two trains/hour Broad Street-Kew Bridge with some trains extended to Twickenham and Kingston. From 1 January 1869 a new line was opened by the London & South Western Railway between the NSWJR at South Acton and Richmond and alternate trains then ran to Richmond this way. This basic service remained until 1909 when some trains became express between Hampstead Heath or Gospel Oak and Broad Street, probably in response to tube and tram competition. From 1867 a Broad Street-Hampstead Heath-Willesden-Addison Road (now Olympia) service was also operated. In 1872 this was extended via Earls Court and the District Railway to Mansion House to form the 'Outer Circle'. In 1912 this service was truncated to shuttle between Earls Court and Willesden Junction.

The NLR experienced a dramatic fall in passenger traffic during 1900-1914 due mainly to tube and tram competition and, in 1908, its operations were taken over by the LNWR. The latter planned electrification and electric trains replaced steam on

Broad Street-Richmond/Kew Bridge services from 1 October 1916. From 1917 a few trains operated Watford Junction-Willesden Junction-Hampstead Heath-Broad Street. The last Kew Bridge trains ran in 1940. The Broad Street-Richmond service continued with falling traffic partly due to the fares policy but has recently revived with the introduction of Travelcards and the Oyster ticketing scheme.

Closure was threatened under the Beeching Plan and again in 1971. However, the diversion of Kentish Town-Barking trains in 1981 to terminate at a new platform at Gospel Oak was undertaken as part of the Midland Line electrification. The GLC also financed the Dalston-North Woolwich electrification in 1986 and most trains were diverted to serve North Woolwich. In April 1971 Kentish Town West was destroyed by fire and not reopened until October 1981. In December 1984 the cutting at the Hampstead Heath end of Hampstead Tunnel collapsed and the through service interrupted for four months. In the 1990s British Rail was privatised and ownership of track and stations passed to Railtrack, now Network Rail. In 1995 Railtrack started an upgrade of the line in connection with the Channel Tunnel Rail Link which included the line's re-electrification with overhead wires. The NLL service was franchised to Silverlink Trains in 1997 and in 2007 this franchise was replaced by an agreement with Transport for London to operate the line under the 'London Overground' banner. From 2005? the NLL service became Stratford-Richmond and some peak period through trains were introduced Stratford-Willesden-Clapham Junction, the first time since 1908 that trains had run through from the HJR to the West London line.

Pickfords in Camden Town

The latest *Newsletter* of the Camden Railway Heritage Trust has an interesting article on the development of the carriers Pickford & Co at Camden Goods Yard. At first Pickford's were at the City Road Basin to service canal traffic but the opening of the London & Birmingham Railway (later the LNWR) prompted Pickford's to divert some of their trade to the faster railway instead of the slow moving canal. This led to a rift because Joseph Baxendale was a partner of the firm but also a director of the Regent's Canal Company. Eventually Baxendale in 1839 bought a plot of land on the south side of the Regent's Canal at the top of Oval Road and William Cubitt constructed a special building there which could transfer goods between road, water and rail.

There is much more in the *Newsletter* which is emailed to members. To join email crht@aol.com or telephone 020 7586 6632. There is a guided walk around the Camden Railway Heritage Trail on Sunday 5 December. Numbers are limited to 20.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Hampstead Museum at Burgh House is staging from 25 November until 27 February an exhibition entitled *Modernism in Hampstead: The Tradition of the New*. This will focus on architecture, as well as modernist thought, art and literature. The permanent exhibition at the museum already has a display on Modernist architecture and design in the area (including the famous Isokon Flats and the Marcel Breuer chair and stacking tables) which the new exhibition will expand upon through exploring different media.

The latest *Newsletter* from Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields, tells us that the Museum has raised enough money to launch its ambitious project 'Opening up the Soane'. This will involve substantial construction within the three buildings that make up the museum. As from January work will begin on the dustiest and noisiest part of the project, the creation of a new exhibition gallery, a shop and conservation studios, and the installation of a new lift. This will be concentrated in No. 12 so the Museum will remain open. Future plans include the restoration and reinstatement of Soane's private apartments on the 2nd floor of No. 13, and later the creation of a StudyRoom in what is now the New Picture Room.

WOLSEY MEWS

Wolsey Mews is a narrow road running parallel to Kentish Town Road between Islip and Gaisford Streets. Premises have recently been taken at No. 25 by a charity called Crossroads Women and they intend to refurbish them. They would very much like to know more about the history of the Mews and in particular, of course, their building. They know from our *Streets of Kentish Town* that it was used as a doll factory and they are researching through street directories for more information. The Mews seems not to have been in residential use before the 1901 census.

If any member has useful information or photographs please contact annat@allwomenscount.net.

The New Review

Number 34 of the *Camden History Review* is enclosed with this *Newsletter*. Edited by David Hayes and designed by Ivor Kamlisch, it is once again packed with informative and well-researched articles on Camden subjects from trams, to stonemasons, to almshouses and much more. And what a marvellous picture on page 33!

This is a view of what used to be called The Brecknock Arms (now The Unicorn) at the junction of Camden Road and Brecknock Road c.1905. Lots of interesting horse-drawn vehicles! At the moment building is taking place on the Islington side of the corner on the right to construct a new showroom to replace a less than distinguished office showroom that already existed. However, this picture shows that what was originally there was a conservatory building. Under a magnifying glass it is possible to see that it was run by Henry Gay of Brecknock Nursery.



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